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MONUMENT TO THE WESTMORELAND REGIMENT THE 55TH REGIMENT OF FOOT IN *DINGHAI CITY ON ZHOUSHAN ISLAND*

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In October 1998 the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society organised a visit for members to Ningbo [Ningpo] and Zhoushan Island[i] [Chusan Island] off the East coast of China in the archipelago of the same name. The object of the visit to Dinghai, the county capital of the archipelago, was to try and follow the course of the British military campaign there during the First and Second China Wars, the First being the so-called Opium War of 1840-1842 and the Second, the *Arrow War* of 1856-1860, and see if any monuments to the British victory and subsequent occupation remained. In particular we were looking for the military cemetery and tombstones.

The Chinese guide who met us in Ningbo and who was to accompany us to Dinghai was most doubtful about our mission.We did not think she was even aware that the British Army had been on Zhoushan 150 years ago. However by the time our ferry docked at Dinghai, maps relating to the campaign, which had been brought along with us had been studied in detail,together with an account by the Reverend Wright.[ii]

In Dinghai our first call was at the local museum where we collected the Curator. We were most fortunate in that he was interested in the China Wars, and not only knew the accounts - albeit from the Chinese point of view - but was able to lead us to the sites of action, and to the one remaining monument to the British.

During the two China Wars Zhoushan had its moments of glory in history after which both conflicts gradually faded from both British national and Chinese local memories. Between the 5th of July 1840 when the city of Dinghai fell before a British attack for the first time, and the 5th of June 1846 when the British restored Zhoushan to the Chinese, the island was ruled twice by the British with its claim to fame as the first Chinese territory ever to be occupied and controlled

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by the British. By the turn of the century folk memory in Zhoushan itself of the battles and occupation by the British had disappeared much as it has today in Weihai in Shandong province, which had been a British naval base, with a colonial governor, leased at the same time as the New Territories of Hong Kong in 1898 and held until handed back to China in 1931.[iii]

The British captured and occupied Zhoushan on two separate occasions during the First Opium War. The first occupation was short and brutal, ending with an agreement ceding Hong Kong to the British, the reopening of Guangzhou [Canton] to foreigners for trade and an indemnity in exchange for the restoration to the Chinese of Zhoushan. Both sides promptly repudiated the agreement but not before Zhoushan had been handed back. The Chinese commissioner, Qi Shan was recalled to Beijing [Peking] in chains and charged with treason having surrendered Chinese soil.

The War restarted some six months after the first retrocession by the British and the city of Dinghai was once more taken. The second occupation of nearly four years was longer but much more amicable on both the British and Chinese sides. The British appear to have failed, intentionally or otherwise, to extend their control far beyond the city of Dinghai and were at the mercy of the local Chinese tradesmen who controlled the victuals required to maintain the British occupation forces. This, however, does not appear to have led to trouble as doubtless the local Chinese were comparatively well paid for their provisions.

Once the third and final British occupation ended, that is after the Second China War in 1860, there would appear to have been neither routine British consular presence on Zhoushan nor representatives of the foreign-run Chinese Maritime Customs on Zhoushan. These were stationed in Ningbo, the city on the mainland a mere couple of hours sailing away. However, there was a lighthouse on Zhoushan run by westerners of the Chinese Maritime Customs though this would seem again to have been directed from Ningbo, and at one stage there was a small American Christian missionary presence contrary to official agreements between the Chinese and Western nations, as well as a Lazarus Mission of Roman Catholics; in practice no Christian missionary presence on the archipelago had been authorised by official agreements.

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Rev. Wright provided the text for Allom's China and wrote a short piece entitled *The Fortress of Terror, Dinghai*. He claimed that 'during the British descent upon the coast of China, nowhere was the destruction of life and property greater than at Dinghai. Every hill on the coast in the vicinity of Dinghai was crowned with a battery of apparent strength; some of them too elevated to be effective. At the entrance of a defile, watered by a rivulet flowing from the valley of Chae-hu [sic], and on an eminence about two hundred feet above the level of the bay, stood one of those deceptive structures, misnamed "The Fortress of Terror," in which the Chinese so lucklessly reposed entire confidence, when the British fleet cast anchor in the roads beneath. No troops, however armed or disciplined, could have acted with more eminent personal gallantry, than the Tatar[iv] garrison of the fort of Terror, yet none ever encountered a more signal overthrow.'[v]

Wright described Zhoushan as an agreeable scene, with every hill cultivated to its summit, every valley, from the mountain's foot to the river's margin with industry and fertility, producing a large surplus for the enrichment of the labourers. These productions, including rice, cotton, seed potatoes, coarse tea and candles made from the seeds of the tallow tree, were conveyed along canals in barges. The roads of Zhoushan were not constructed for the convenience of visitors, the gratification of travellers, or the mere objects of pleasure.

In describing the city of Dinghai, Wright noted that it did not stand upon the marshy ground but on the sloping side of the Yongdong Valley. It was surrounded by a brick wall twenty-six feet in height, sixteen in thickness, and six miles in circuit, with four entrance gates corresponding exactly with the four cardinal points. The city was intersected by canals, the streets were narrow and paved, and with a public open sewer along the middle.

Between 1841 and 1844 the Westmoreland Regiment served with the British force during the campaign to capture and hold the Island of Zhoushan. The assault on and occupation of Zhoushan during the First China War was one of many along the coast of Southern and Eastern China. It culminated in the Treaty of Nanjing [Nanking] in August 1842 under terms by which occupation forces held on to several places until the treaty was fully implemented, Zhoushan being one. There was a school of British opinion at the time which strongly believed that we

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should have taken Zhoushan Island rather than, to quote Palmerston's scathing words, 'the barren rock' of Hong Kong which would have undoubtedly altered the course of history and British relations with China in the 20th century.

The Westmoreland Regiment,[vi] part of a larger British expeditionary force, therefore returned to Zhoushan Island after the Treaty had been signed and remained on until 1844. A monument was raised in Dinghai dedicated to the few from the ranks who had been killed in action and the many who during the occupation had died of diseases so prevalent there. An annex to a report written probably in the 1880s provides us with the wording on the monument as well as a second annex describes the wording on a separate monument dedicated to Captain Colin Campbell of the Westmoreland Regiment who died at Zhoushan on the 29th May 1842 of a wound received in action at Zhapu [Chapu].[vii]

The wording on the main monument read:

Sacred

to The Memory of

11 Sergeants, 13 Corporals, 4 Drummers,

and 403 Privates

of H.M. 55th Regt

who were killed in action

or died from disease

while serving in China

from the 14th July 1841

to the 22nd February 1844

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This Monument is erected

by the non-commissioned officers

of the above Regt

As a token of respect

May They rest in peace.

The undated and unsigned manuscript report[viii] held in the archives of the Regimental Museum of the Kings Own Royal Border Regiment in Carlisle reads as follows :

"As no opportunity presented itself of obtaining a passage in one of HM's Ships to Chusan I deemed it advisable after waiting over three months, to delay no longer and accordingly chartered a native boat in which I left for Chusan on the 20th inst.

I found that the reports as to the dilapidated condition of the monument in question were by no means exaggerated. The structure which is an oblong brick cube about 6 feet high and 4 feet wide and deep with stuccoed edges and a granite tablet on which the inscription is cut inserted on the eastern side is in a wretched state of decay. Many of the corner bricks have crumbled away and in a very few years the whole block will fall to pieces unless some repairs are speedily undertaken. At the back or South side of the monument a mud cottage forming one of a row of four is built the roof of which almost touches the summit of it and adds materially to the progress of the decay by the drippings from it which sink into the ground at its base. These cottages are tenanted by four families of squatters and in front of them the back being towards the monument - are two other monuments oblong in shape and about three feet high which appear to be used as tables or beds as the case may be by the squatters. One of them erected to Captain Colin Campbell of the 55th Regt who died of a wound received in action at Chapoo has lost a large portion of the base upon which the stone bearing the inscription lies and must soon fall to pieces unless the progress of the decay be arrested.

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The occupants of these huts could shew no title deed or other document empowering them to make use of the land, and at once freely admitted that they had no right to remain other than that acquired by several years of undisputed occupation but besought me if I insisted on their removal to bestow some slight compensation upon them to enable them to find quarter elsewhere. It would have been possible perhaps to have obtained their eviction without compensation by applying to the local authority but it appeared to me that this would have been an injustice to these unfortunate people who had built their huts in apparent ignorance of the want of a right to do so. Indeed it would have been difficult to establish any claim on our own part to the land as no title deeds are to be found in this Consulate or anywhere in support of our right.

Having no authority from the Foreign Office to do more than report upon the condition of the monument, I was somewhat at a loss to know what answer to make to these people. Had I contented myself with a simple notice to them to quit they would certainly have disregarded it, and had I applied to the local authority he might have questioned our title to the land and even in the event of his consenting to evict they would have been the victims of extortion on the part of his underlings and my object would have been secured at the expense of an injustice. On the other hand the question of their right of occupation having once been raised their eviction at a future date, if it became necessary would be rendered much more difficult had the matter been left in abeyance. I at length came to the conclusion therefore in view of the strong personal interest displayed in the matter by Lieut Gen Daubeny and the Officers of the 55th Regt to take upon myself to expend a small sum and after some discussion induced the occupants of the cottages to pull them down and remove the débris for the sum of ten dollars, or roughly two pounds sterling, it being understood that the money should be paid only on condition that the demolition was completed within a fortnights time. A native resident of the place who is known to me having at the same time undertaken to repair both the monument to the non-commissioned officers and men of the 55th Regt and that of Capt Colin Campbell for 10 dollars more. I also agreed to pay that sum on completion of the repairs. The hire of the boat cost me 10 dollars which will be accounted for separately.

It will be for Lieut General Daubeny of course to decide whether he is prepared to reimburse the whole or a portion of this amount as I fully recognise that in expending the money on the repairs to the monument and eviction of the squatters I have acted without authority.

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I append a copy of the inscriptions on the two monuments in question with a list of the other headstones in the same locality which may possibly prove useful for future reference.

Appended to the report was a copy of a list of gravestones within the British cemetery in Dinghai also recorded during the visit of the individual who wrote the report. It came as somewhat of a surprise to us to note the number of graves of wives and children of British soldiers as we had assumed that during the two short assaults on Zhoushan in 1842 and 1857, and the several years of occupation British soldiers were without their dependants, because of the remoteness of China from the more permanent British bases.

List of Monuments in British Graveyard

at Chusan

1. Monument to 55th Regt.
2. Captain Colin Campbell
3. Commander Harmer, H.M.S. Driver
4. Eliza Woods and infant son wife of Sergeant Woods.
5. Captain Hopton Steward of — ix Regt. Madras Native Infantry.
6. Wife of Quarter Master Perl Royal Irish Regiment.
7. Corporal M. Gleeson 98th Regt.
8. Sergt. Blake, 98th Regt.
9. Infant daughter of Sergt. Cobden
10. Mrs. Gregory, wife of Lieut Colonel Gregory 98th Regt.

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11. Wife of Sergt. Galpin, 98th Regt.

12. Wife of Brevet Captain Dunbar

13. Sikh's grave (Inscription in Arabic) [sic]

14. Ensign Duell 55th Regt[x].

15. Private Spiby 55th Regt.

16. 6 Seamen H.M.S. "Cambrian".

17. Private Chiltern 98th Regt.

18. Wife of Sergeant (obliterated)

19. C.W. Moore, Naval Cadet H.M.S. "Wolf".

20. Alex Fraser 98th Regt.

21. Private Brooke, 98th Regt.

22. Charles Manning 98th D°.

23. Wife of Ino Smith 98th D°.

24. Wife of Sergeant (obliterated) 98th D°.

25. Two Privates 98th Regt.

26. Sergeant Slattery 98th D°.

27. M. Holmes, seaman H.M.S. "Wolf".

28. R. Butler, Asst Surgeon H.M.S. "Arab".

29. I. Kelly of Band 98th Regt.

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30. Private Wombles D°. D°.

Whilst we have no idea what has happened to the Monument dedicated to the Westmoreland Regiment in Zhoushan we were taken by the curator to the site of a Chinese horseshoe-shaped grave bearing the inscription in Chinese carved into a lengthy granite slab in pre-simplified characters [that is pre-1950s], stating that it to be

The Tomb of Officers and Men of the Army and Navy of Great Britain

大英水陸將士墓

It had been refurbished as recently as 1993 by the Chinese Peoples' Liberation Army, [PLA Navy], apparently unsolicited and without any ceremony.[xi]

The monument was situated on the north facing slope of a low hill overlooking the town of Dinghai. There was little to see. A modern concrete edifice some three feet high holds an original granite block. Above it on the slope, some ten feet away, is another monument which bears neither inscription nor clues to its original purpose. It is rectangular standing some six feet high, two foot six inches wide and about ten inches deep. It has three indented faces, central, left and right on which, presumably, the erstwhile inscribed tablets had been inserted. These two monuments are situated overlooking Dinghai Town but facing away from the sea and at the rear of a radio station with one tall mast and several radio dishes, possibly a PLA [Navy] unit on the Island.

It would be interesting to obtain the current Chinese official version of the provenance of the two monuments.

As an interesting side note - at the foot of the hill on which the two monuments stand, a Chinese lady, a member of our party from Hong Kong, recognised her family 'ancestral' home from the descriptions she had heard of its European design with Chinese touches. It is now the residence of the Admiral of the Chinese PLA [Navy] responsible

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for that area. Our local guide quite unabashed, led us straight into the main courtyard, where we took photographs before a polite message from the Admiral, relayed to us by a staff officer, advised us that he was shortly expecting visitors.

NOTES

[i] Zhoushan Island, as with many other cities and areas in China, is now rapidly undergoing industrialisation with plans for an airport, factories and container terminals. There has even been talk of building a bridge across to the mainland. Zhoushan is romanised using the current Chinese pinyin system. Formerly is was known as Chusan using the western system devised by British scholars during the late 19th century.

[ii] *China* was published in 1844, illustrated by Allom and referred to in general as *Allom's China* ; however, a former missionary, the Reverend Wright, wrote the text.

[iii] Folk memory can be short, especially when it suits the authorities, and in 1998 people in Wei-hai under the age of seventy either looked blank and disbelieving when we told them of the British lease, or corrected us saying that we were mistaken. They explained that it was the colony of Hong Kong which had been handed back in 1997 and that the British had never been near Weihai.

[iv] Other pedants may wish to note that the word Tatar tends to be 'misspelled' as Tartar. The original word in Chinese is Dada'er 達達兒 in pinyin and Ta-ta-erh in Wade-Giles. My history professor used to bark that tartar is on teeth!

[v] A Chinese historian writing during the late 1950s described the progression of the British forces up the South-east coast of China in a very abbreviated history and mentioned in a few words that " the local people in Amoy [Xiamen] had dislodged the British occupationists and forced them to evacuate the port city. The Chinese defenders made a gallant stand at Tinghai [Dinghai]. Fierce fighting continued for six days and nights. The British suffered heavy casualties. Although General Ko Yun-fei [Ke Yunfei] was covered with more than forty wounds, he fought till he breathed his last. Hei Shui Tang [Black Waters], a people's armed unit, also inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy". [Tung Chi-ming : *An Outline History of China* : Foreign languages Press : Peking : 1959 ; p 215].

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[vi] We are indebted to the Museum of the King's Own Royal Border Regiment in the Castle at Carlisle for permission to quote from the regimental diaries of the Westmoreland Regiment in Chusan.

[vii] See the article *The Taking of Chapu* by Keith Stevens in Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the RAS : Vol.34 : 1994 : pp 119+].

[viii] The report would appear to have been written in the 1880s during the incumbency as the Colonel of the Regiment of Lieutenant General Daubeny. This was about the same time as an amalgamation of regiments when the Westmoreland Regiment became the 2nd Battalion of the Border Regiment.

[ix] Regimental number omitted

[x] Ensign Richard James Duell fell dead, shot in the chest at close quarters during the assault on the heights held by the Chinese. He had only heard that morning, October 1, 1841, of his promotion from the rank of Sergeant-Major and at once requested the honour to carry the regimental colour in the impending attack. During the advance Lieutenant and Acting-Adjutant Butler after a sharp struggle with a Chinese soldier, captured the only imperial standard taken during the war. It was deposited in Kendal Church where it can still be seen beside the regimental memorial. [see also Bruce. P : *An Imperial Chinese Banner Preserved in Kendal, England* : Journal HK Br RAS : vol. 23 : 1983 : pp 202-203]

[xi] Beside the Chinese characters, extreme left of the inscription, is a small cartouche containing smaller illegible characters which was almost certainly a date in old style.

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Monument to the fallen British officers and men at Dinghai on Zhoushan Island-China Wars 1840-42,1857-60 [Photo:Jennifer Welch]